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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - IRAQ

11. On March 20, all stations featured stories regarding the third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Quotes:

12. Private Megavision's pundit Libardo Buitrago said:

"The invasion of Iraq is far from achieving the objectives set by President George Bush. First, it did not demonstrate that Iraq and Saddam were a real threat to the security of Iraq's neighbors or the U.S.; second, neither weapons of mass destruction nor evidence that Hussein actually had had them were found; and third, it did not prove Saddam had ties with international terrorism, particularly with Al Qaeda. However, one can point out that the Iraqis had their first democratic elections, President Bush's most important argument to justify an incursion in Iraq... Since the beginning for the war, more than 100,000 civilians have died and 200,000 have been wounded.

For the U.S. the conflict has signified an expenditure of more than USD 300 billion and 2,300 U.S. dead soldiers.... Three years later, the allies face the worst scenario--a civil war over power between Sunni and Shiite religious groups that threatens to last for many years. Despite this, President Bush assured today that the U.S. would remain in Iraq until Iraq's reconstruction is complete. Even amidst worldwide criticism (of the U.S.), the comments of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez'-in which he called Bush genocidal, drunk and thick headed (burro)-are surprising. Bush has yet to respond but did defend the occupation of Iraq, arguing that Iraq's inhabitants have more freedom and that Hussein must face justice for the crimes committed under his rule."

13. Private Chilevision:

"Iraq remembers today the third anniversary of the war initiated by the U.S. Although Hussein's dictatorship is over, the Iraqis live with insecurity, sectarianism and political crisis that has delayed the creation of an autonomous government in Iraq."

14. Conservative Channel 13:

"Criticism against the invasion of Iraq has grown with the years. Although it was supposed to liberate Iraq, in reality it maintains Iraqis in total chaos and on the brink of civil war.... There is pressure from the U.S. people to withdraw troops from Iraq.... In terms of security, infrastructure and peace efforts, the operation has been a total failure."

YAMAUCHI